

LARRY THE MENTOR

W. C. Stone
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INTRODUCTION

I was honored to be asked to be part of this symposium and tribute to Dr. Larry Chase. Larry has made significant, important contributions to the dairy industry, and I am pleased to be able to share a few of these with you.

Mentor, in the classic *The Odyssey*, was the loyal friend and advisor of Odysseus, and teacher of his son Telemachus. Mentor today refers to an experienced and trusted advisor, and is a role that Larry has filled for many people throughout his distinguished career.

GRADUATE STUDENTS

Dr. Chase served on the graduate committees of nearly fifty graduate students, 20 of which he chaired. I was fortunate to be one of these students, and will describe some of the ways that Larry has been a “trusted advisor and friend” to me and some of his other graduate students.

I started my graduate program in 1990. I knew that I wanted my graduate research to be on the applied side, but did not have any idea on the specific topic. I struggled with this for about a year, reading, thinking, and talking with other graduate students. Larry let me wrestle and think – which was the completely appropriate approach - and then he made a suggestion. He pointed out that we had this model (I’m referring to “THE Model”, of course), but did not actually know how it performed on the farm. He asked if I might be interested in evaluating the CNCPS on commercial dairy farms. I realized instantly that it was the perfect project for me. My goal was to have my own nutrition consulting business when I completed my graduate program. This project looked like it would have the potential to help train me in the nutrition field while at the same time helping to fulfill my responsibilities as a graduate student. Larry helped to identify three well-managed dairies with cooperative owners, and the rest of the project was all mine. And I appreciated that too – there was absolutely no micromanagement from my advisor or committee; the research project was mine to plan, implement, monitor, and evaluate. Thankfully, it did succeed, and led to some exciting economic and performance results which were shared at the CNC (Stone, Chase, and Fox, 1992), and which helped to energize interest by agribusiness in the CNCPS. Topics for the remaining research projects in my graduate program all then easily came to me from experiences I was having while working with the CNCPS on commercial dairy herds.

Interestingly, Dr. Mary Beth de Ondarza (MS Cornell, 1990) comments, “When I was his grad student, I remember being a bit frustrated when he didn’t always give me all the answers to my questions. However, now I am thankful that he helped me learn to think through problems independently!”

Dr. Mary Beth Hall (PhD Cornell, 1996) has had the opportunity to work with Larry when she was an extension educator, graduate student, and finally university and USDA researcher. Referring to her extension days, Mary Beth writes, “Larry was wonderful to work with when I was a Cornell Cooperative Extension county agent (1980’s). Actually, Charlie Sniffen and Larry Chase were a rare and wonderful duo to work with – sort of dairy nutrition yin and yang. If you asked a question, Charlie would give a very straight forward and direct answer. Larry, on the other hand, would start asking you questions (when, (expletive deleted), we just wanted answers!). He would get you to walk around your question and get a better idea of what actually was involved, and you often ended up formulating your own answer. I think that getting a direct, single answer from Larry was rare, but he did a fine job of helping us to learn and understand.”

EXTENSION

New York has had a large, active extension program throughout Larry’s career. Paul Cerosaletti, Senior Resource Educator with Delaware County Extension writes, “I have worked closely with Dr. Chase for the entire twenty years of my career in Extension. Dr. Chase has always been a reliable resource for those of us in Extension and there is no question that the New York dairy industry has benefited greatly from his expertise and leadership in many areas for a long time. New York State has the most active dairy farm feed nutrient management projects that are on the ground working with commercial dairy farms than any state in the nation. These projects have been led and implemented by Cornell Cooperative Extension and Dr. Chase has played leadership and advisory roles in all of them. He has provided guidance in the development of the projects, and collaborated in the summary of data and encouraged and co-authored extension and research publications stemming from these projects. He has also helped foster collaboration with the NY feed industry in the implementation of these projects, which has been critical to the success of the projects.” Extension is going to miss Dr. Larry Chase.

Larry is gifted at taking research results to the field and helping to change the status quo. Dr. Dwight Roseler (MS Cornell, 1990; PhD Cornell, 1994) did a Feed Dealers tour of duty with Larry, and he states, “Dr. Chase is a person that makes the complicated nutrition concepts come to practical life! Larry was always looking at things from an applied and practical sense. He had the ability and desire to always keep the field informed with his Feed Dealers meetings.” As a testament to this, John Zmich, nutritionist and agribusiness representative, shares, “My earliest recollection of Larry is from 1981 when I moved to New York and attended my first Feed Manufacturers Workshop. At these meetings Larry created an atmosphere that my colleagues in the industry looked forward to in order to gain knowledge about the latest trends and

research. We all valued these opportunities to further our understanding of the issues of the day. Larry was one of the strongest and earliest advocates for reducing inorganic phosphorous feeding. Today the levels of phosphorus fed are a fraction of what they were in the seventies.”

PERSONAL CHARACTERISTICS

One key to Dr. Chase's success, I think, has been his follow-up to requests for assistance. Willard DeGolyer, western New York dairy producer, member of the CALS Advisory Board, and past President of NEDPA writes, “We have always found Dr. Chase to be a valuable and highly available resource. We can reach out to Larry when challenging feed decisions must be made, and he always has a prompt, well thought out answer.”

Dr. Jim Aldrich (MS Cornell, 1987) shared several similar experiences in his interactions with Larry.

“Larry was instrumental in igniting my interest in dairy cattle nutrition which became my life long career. I first encountered Larry as an undergrad at Cornell when he taught the dairy nutrition section of the Dairy Cattle Management class led by Dr. Carl Coppock. This was in 1976. Larry probably doesn't remember me from those days and I'm almost sure he probably doesn't remember our next “encounter.” After graduating from Cornell I moved to Iowa and went into partnership on a dairy. We milked 50 registered Holsteins and my partner also had a beef and cropping operation. Cows were housed on a bedding pack. We fed corn silage more or less free choice in a round the upright silo feeder. A fixed amount of hay was fed separately in a hay rack and grain was offered twice a day in a double 3 parlor. The feeders in the parlor were gravity flow hand crank – so almost impossible to adjust amount fed by production level. Total Unmixed Ration. Milk yield wasn't stellar and we struggled to maintain 3.5% milk fat. I needed some nutritional advice – I wanted to see if there was anything we could do with the parlor formulation or anything else to increase production. So not knowing any nutritionists locally, I gathered all the information I could (average corn silage, hay, and parlor grain intake and the parlor grain composition). I put all this down in a letter and sent it to Dr. Coppock. (A real letter, typed on a manual Underwood typewriter - prehistoric days). Soon thereafter I received a reply from Dr. Coppock that he passed the information on to Dr. Larry Chase. Of course I was thinking at the time Dr. Chase doesn't know me from Adam and I'm in Iowa, he's a busy man so I'll probably never hear back from him. However Larry sent me a reply – he had actually done the calculations and said the cows were probably short on protein and recommended an increase in protein (soybean meal) in the parlor grain. And furthermore, forage intake should be higher. I made the change in the parlor grain and started feeding more hay (and more often).

Long story short – in less than 2 years our rolling herd average increased just over 2,000 lb. Milk fat percent stayed about the same largely because of slug feeding grain in parlor and forage free choice selection. But we gained milk fat yield obviously.

I was really grateful that Larry took the time to respond to my letter. Everyone who knows Larry today wouldn't be surprised he did this. This is who he is and what he has done his entire career. He is dedicated to helping people and giving unselfishly of his time, whether to producers, students, extension agents, faculty colleagues, or even a dumb young dairy farmer from Iowa.

I returned to NY in 1979 and took the Dairy Extension Agent position in Washington County in Eastern NY. That is where my passion for dairy cattle nutrition really began to blossom. Still wet behind the ears as far as nutrition expertise goes, Larry along with Dr. Charlie Sniffen took me under their wing and helped train me and mentor me and solidified my lifelong career choice – dairy cattle nutrition. After 6 years in Extension I took a sabbatical to work on a Master's. Dr. Larry Chase was my major professor. I finished that up with Larry's continued guidance in 1987. You can say that Larry started me on the career that I still practice today. Hopefully, somewhat successfully. Larry, I am proud to have had the association with you over the years as a teacher, advisor, mentor and friend. Thank you."

I think that two other personal characteristics have made Larry a mentor to many. First, if he doesn't know the answer to something, he simply states so, but then will do his best to find that answer if it exists. I had a situation on a dairy in the CNCPS evaluation project where cows had, from one month to the next, diverted energy from production to adipose; body condition scores had increased and production had decreased. I ran the scenario by Larry, he smiled and said, "Now you're asking the good questions!" This occurred in about 1993, and it's amazing how much we have learned about the effects of ensiling time and dry matter on starch availability, trans fatty acids and the physiologic effects they can have on the cow, and the Hepatic Oxidation Theory.

The other personal characteristic that has helped many to accept Larry as an "experienced and trusted advisor" is his humble, quiet demeanor. Rick Zimmerman, Executive Director of the Northeast Agribusiness and Feed Alliance, writes, "Larry effectively, but unassumingly offers expert leadership and advice for the betterment of our dairy farm industry. He remains that quiet, yet effective individual who has a gift for guiding farmers, nutritionists, feed industry representatives and colleagues to achieve their goals leading to a more successful dairy industry."

WITH THANKS

Larry, on behalf of former graduate students, extension educators, colleagues, agribusiness representatives, and dairy producers, thank you for being a trusted advisor and friend. We sincerely appreciate all of the help, guidance, and counsel you have provided, and all of the information you have shared over the years. We wish you and Arlene the very best in your retirement.